

Getting Started – A *brief primer* for using the COAP Forum

The COAP Forum uses the open source **phpBB** forum software. It allows people to post ideas, opinions, and information in an organized way. Posts are organized in a way that makes it easy for people to find the information they are interested in, but without having to wade through unrelated information. Postings in phpBB are organized into three subdivisions:

Post - A post is a piece of information submitted by a single user. It may be a new post, which starts a new topic, or a reply to an existing post. Posts are typically a sentence, paragraph, or a few paragraphs.

Topic - A topic is a collection of posts. The posts are organized in chronological order. The idea of a topic is that there is a single post that contains the topic of discussion. The rest of the posts in the topic are replies to this first post and to other replies. Topics are sort of like conversations, allowing many people to state their opinions about an idea, or debate an issue.

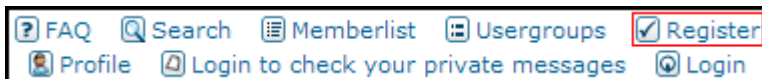
Forum - A forum is a container for topics. Forums often have a general subject that the topics within are about. For instance, we currently have a *COAP Courtyard*, which contains the Dashboard presentation from the recent Statewide Meeting.

User Accounts

phpBB is based on a user system. When a user is logged in, his/her username will be shown with each post he/she makes.

Registration

In order to log into the board, you must register a username. To do this, click the small Register link at the top of any page.




You will be taken to the **Registration Agreement Terms**, which you must agree to in order to register. You will then be taken to the registration information form. Fill out each of the required fields, and any of the optional fields you like. The settings on the registration form are identical to those in the **Profile Settings** form.

When you register, you must specify an email address. All email from the board to you will be sent to that address.

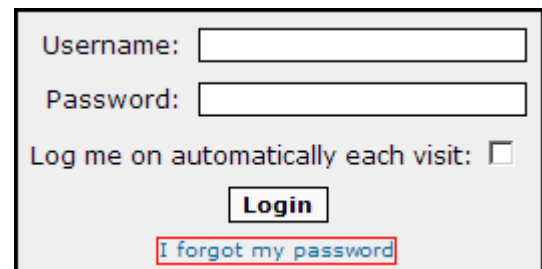
Logging In

In order to post using your username and use your custom settings on the board, you must log in. To log in, you must use the small login form at the bottom of the **Forum Index** page.



Alternatively you may click the small Login link at the top of any page to be taken to the **Login Page**.

If you forget your password, go to the **Login Page**. Click I forgot my password.



You will be taken to a form to enter your username and email address. A new password will be created, and sent in an email to you. When you receive the email, you need to click the new password activation link. After you have activated your new password, you may log in with it. You may also change your password in your profile.

Posting

There are two primary ways to create a post. In the **View Forum** and **View Topic** pages, you may click New Topic. This will take you to the posting form, and, when you have posted, will create a new topic with your post as the first one in the topic. In the **View Topic** page, you may also click Reply. This will take you to the posting form, and, when you have posted, it will add your post to the topic you replied to.

Posting Form

When you post a new topic or post a reply, you are taken to the posting form, where to enter your post.

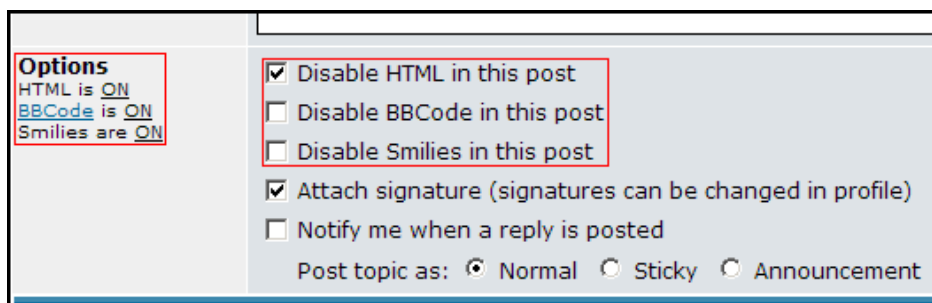
Subject - The subject of your post. If this is a new post, the subject is required, and it will be the name of the topic. If the post is replying to another post, the subject is not required, but may be added, and will be shown at the top of the post.

Message Body - The Message body is a large text area where the body of your post is input. Plain text is the only thing allowed in this text area, but special formatting, links, smilies (emoticons), images, etc. may be added through the use of **Smilies**, **BBCode** and/or **HTML** (if they are enabled).

Smilies - Smilies (also called emoticons) can be added to posts. You may only use smilies in your post if they are enabled on the board you are using. To see if smilies are enabled, look in the lower left corner of the posting form, you should see "Smilies are ON/OFF". If smilies are enabled and you wish to disable them in your post, check the box next to Disable Smilies in this Post.

BBCode - BBCode allows you to add special formatting to your posts. You may only use BBCode in your post if it is enabled on the board you are using. To see if BBCode is enabled, look in the lower left corner of the posting form, you should see "BBCode is ON/OFF". If BBCode is enabled and you wish to disable it in your post, check the box next to Disable BBCode in this Post.

HTML - You may use HTML to format your posts. You may only use HTML in your post if it is enabled on the board you are using. To see if HTML is enabled, look in the lower left corner of the posting form, you should see "HTML is ON/OFF". If HTML is enabled and you wish to disable it in your post, check the box next to Disable HTML in this Post.



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Options' section in a forum's posting form. It contains several checkboxes and radio buttons. A red box highlights the 'Options' header and the status of HTML, BBCode, and Smilies. Another red box highlights the 'Disable HTML in this post' checkbox, which is checked. Below these are checkboxes for 'Disable BBCode in this post' (unchecked) and 'Disable Smilies in this post' (unchecked). There is also a checked checkbox for 'Attach signature (signatures can be changed in profile)' and an unchecked checkbox for 'Notify me when a reply is posted'. At the bottom, there are radio buttons for 'Post topic as: Normal', 'Sticky', and 'Announcement', with 'Normal' selected.

Signature - You may add a signature to your post. To do this, check the box next to **Attach Signature**. You may change your signature by editing your profile.

Reply Notification - When you post, you may be interested in knowing when that topic is replied to. If so, you may check **Notify me when a reply is posted**.

***For more information on using the COAP Forum,
please see the expanded Forum Tutorial available soon on our web page...***